

## **SOUTH LAKE UNION DESIGN FRAMEWORK PURPOSE AND INTENT**

### **What is the Design Framework?**

The SLU Design Framework will **establish a shared design vision and implementation strategy** for the future of South Lake Union. By bridging 15 years of community planning with specific implementation strategies, it will help to realize the vision the neighborhood set out in the neighborhood plan. In November 2008, the City proposed three alternative height and density alternatives for study in an EIS. While these alternatives provide a variety of scenarios for increased height and density, the Design Framework is essential to address how the physical development of the neighborhood will affect quality of life and the role that place-making and urban design play in creating a successful neighborhood. The Design Framework, with the guidance of a range of community stakeholders, draws on past planning efforts and evaluation of new opportunities to identify the specific projects, actions, and design opportunities that will ensure new development, both public and private, strengthens the livability and sense of place in South Lake Union and advances the goals and strategies set out in the Neighborhood Plan.

### **Organizing Goals and Principals**

The SLU Design Framework will focus on development of the neighborhood consistent with the goals set out in the 1998 and 2007 Neighborhood Plans. Key elements of those plans include:

- A pervasive human scale ambiance consistent with a vital aesthetically pleasing, safe and energetic neighborhood which embraces a dynamic intermixing of opportunities for working living and playing;
- Retention of a significant element of the area's commercial activities, including opportunities for business growth;
- A full spectrum of housing opportunities;
- Ecologically-sound development and life-styles and promotion of ecologically sound business practices consistent within the regulatory environment; ease of transportation for all modes within and through the area;
- A variety of open spaces serving the needs of the area and the city, with emphasis on Lake Union, and its continued preservation for a wide range of uses; and
- Sensitivity to the area's history and historical elements; and coordination with plans of adjacent neighborhood.

To achieve this vision, the Design Framework process is organized around advancing the following principles. These themes distill the key ideas that are found across the range of planning efforts over the last 15 years:

*Encourage innovative, equitable development* that maximizes opportunities for diverse housing types and commercial uses, provides for comfortable street enclosure, sun access and public views, optimizes circulation and access, increases affordable housing opportunities, and promotes sustainable design.

*Create safe, attractive streets and public spaces* as the setting for the neighborhood's public life, with a hierarchy of high-quality spaces including vibrant retail streets and plazas for gathering, "green streets" with gracious pedestrian connections, and gateways that improve connections to adjacent districts.

*Identify opportunities to improve access to community services over time* through creative partnerships that could attract cultural organizations, service providers, and possibly a school to the neighborhood.

## What the Design Framework Is Not

The Design Framework is fundamentally a tool to influence the physical development of South Lake Union. It will advance those Neighborhood Plan goals and strategies that can be influenced through the use and design of buildings, streets, and public spaces in South Lake Union. Goals set out in the neighborhood plan that are not related to physical design (e.g. affordable housing, human services) will be discussed but will require additional effort that is outside the scope of the Design Framework. In addition, while the Design Framework will address how to best design buildings at varying heights, it will not propose specific height limits at various locations, which is the subject of detailed analysis as part of the EIS. The Design Framework will identify strategies to ensure taller buildings are well integrated into their surroundings and meet neighborhood plan goals through the use of view corridors, standards for tower spacing and footprints, etc.

## Final Outcomes and Implementation

The City will produce a summary document that represents the design strategies and implementation actions arrived at through the planning process. The Design Framework will include a robust "Implementation Matrix" that will describe the specific role and responsibilities of public agencies, community organizations, property owners and others in implementing the Design Framework's recommendations.

These strategies and actions will provide the basis for zoning changes, amendments to the South Lake Union Design Guidelines, and other implementation actions necessary to ensure the neighborhood develops consistent with the goals of the Neighborhood Plan. A variety of tools will be used to implement recommendations:

- **Incentive zoning.** The height and density scenarios being studied in the EIS will likely result in an incentive-zoning proposal for South Lake Union. Through an incentive zoning proposal developers are allowed to build taller buildings in exchange for providing specific public improvements and mitigations. Although the UDF is not addressing height limits per se, it will identify what type of improvements, such as on-site open space or streetscape enhancements, should be linked to increases in development capacity.
- **Development Standards.** Development standards are part of the existing zoning code and establish specific requirements that proposed projects must comply with. Examples of development standards include requirements for building setbacks, location of parking, Floor Area Ratio limits, etc. Where appropriate, the Design Framework will recommend development standards to be incorporated into the future zoning for South Lake Union.
- **Design Guidelines.** Some Design Framework recommendations may be more appropriate as guidance to projects pursuing Departures as part of the Design Review process. Such recommendations may be implemented through amendments to the SLU Neighborhood Design Guidelines.
- **EIS Mitigation.** The City will complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on several alternatives for increases in height and density in the South Lake Union Neighborhood. The Design Framework will inform mitigation measures (development standards, design guidelines, transportation and utility improvements) analyzed in the EIS. In addition, the Design Framework may inform development of mitigation for project level environmental review.
- **Reuse of Public Property.** City-owned land in the neighborhood offers an opportunity to advance neighborhood plan goals through public/private partnerships to provide key

neighborhood amenities. Consistent with Neighborhood Plan goals and strategies, the Design Framework will identify specific strategies to leverage neighborhood amenities from the sale or redevelopment of city-owned land.

- **Right-of-Way Design and Management.** The Design Framework will evaluate how streets function and are designed to address Neighborhood Plan goals and strategies related to neighborhood character, transportation function, and providing open space connections.

### **Project Team**

Marshall Foster (OPM) and Jim Holmes (DPD) will manage the project, with urban design and technical support from Weber Thompson. A working group of city staff will support the ongoing work, including DPD's City Design and City Green Building teams, SDOT and Parks. DON, SCL, SPU and the Office of Housing will participate as needed.

### **Process**

The Project Team will work closely with a Working Group comprised of a range of community stakeholders beginning in April and ending in July/August. Given the extensive public planning to date, the team will develop proposals through a series of charrettes and vet proposals with the working group. An initial charrette was held in May to look holistically at the neighborhood, review past plans and new opportunities and develop a list of six potential "opportunities" for further study. The proposed opportunity charrettes have been structured in such a way to build upon each other and achieve the project goals by identifying and studying opportunities and challenges at different scales as well as implementation strategies.

The first two charrettes will look at the following issues across all of South Lake Union:

- Gateways, Hearts, and Edges
- Street Character and Connections

The middle two charrettes will be focus on the following specific opportunities and challenges identified in the macro charrettes, as well as testing ways to achieve specific goals of the neighborhood. These charrettes will study:

- Residential Areas (Denny Park and Cascade)
- Waterfront Blocks

The final two charrettes will be focused on implementation strategies to translate the key proposals from the first four charrettes. These charrettes will study:

- Implementation: Prototype Blocks
- Implementation: Incentive Strategies